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FBI reviews story about KGB murder

By Bill Gertz
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The FBI is reviewing information supplied by Soviet KGB official Vitaly Yurchenko that Soviet agents abducted and murdered Nicholas Shadrin, a Soviet defector who turned double agent for the FBI and CIA and then disappeared, his wife, Blanka Shadrin, said in a recent interview.

But Mrs. Shadrin said she spoke to FBI officials last week and was told the FBI still believes Mr. Shadrin died in the hands of the KGB, despite Mr. Yurchenko's Nov. 2 defection to the Soviet Union.

According to a secret State Department cable sent to the American Embassy in Moscow, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs R. Mark Palmer lodged an official protest Oct. 28 with the Soviet Embassy's deputy chief of mission, Oleg Sokolov, on the KGB's murder of Mr. Shadrin in 1975.

A copy of the cable was obtained by The Washington Times.

Mr. Shadrin was a former Soviet destroyer captain who defected to the United States in 1959. He worked

for U.S. naval intelligence and was involved in a CIA attempt to help a Soviet KGB operative purportedly cooperating with U.S. authorities to move up in the ranks of the KGB hierarchy. In 1967, Mr. Shadrin, at the direction of the FBI and CIA, allowed the KGB operative, code-named "Igor," who was then in the United States, to recruit him into the KGB as a "double agent." Intelligence experts now believe Igor was only pretending to work for the United States in order to capture Mr. Shadrin.

Mrs. Shadrin said her husband had been under a Soviet death sentence since his defection.

"They took terrible advantage of my husband," Mrs. Shadrin said. "To let him go to Vienna without any protection is a criminal act."

As part of the plan to establish his credibility, FBI and CIA officials allowed Mr. Shadrin, a naturalized American citizen, to go to Vienna to meet KGB officials in 1972 and 1975. He never returned from the 1975 meeting.

Former CIA Director William Colby said recently in a television interview that the CIA was to blame

for Mr. Shadrin's abduction because it did not provide adequate surveillance to protect him in Vienna.

"The U.S. government has reliably learned that Nicholas George Shadrin ... was abducted by representatives of the Soviet intelligence service (the KGB) on or about Dec. 28, 1975," the cable stated. "During the abduction of Shadrin, a chemical substance was forcefully administered to him, rendering him unconscious."

Intelligence sources have said the source for details about Mr. Shadrin's death was Mr. Yurchenko, although at a news conference at the Soviet Embassy here on Nov. 4, Mr. Yurchenko denied having ever heard of him.

The cable said that Mr. Shadrin was driven by the KGB toward the Hungarian border "but died before reaching the border, apparently as a direct result of the chemical substance forcefully applied to render him unconscious."

The State Department told Mr. Sokolov the abduction and murder were "reprehensible" and said there is no excuse for a government committing such acts.

"This case is particularly disturbing since the United States repeatedly asked for information in this case and was assured by high-level representatives of the Soviet Union that they had no information on Mr. Shadrin," the cable stated. The case was discussed between President Gerald Ford and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in 1976.

Robert Kupperman, a friend of Mr. Shadrin, said that, despite Mr. Yurchenko's return to the Soviet Union, he still believes Mr. Yurchenko's account of the fate of Mr. Shadrin.

Mr. Kupperman, a senior associate at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, said Mr. Shadrin clearly was a double agent. "The question is whether he was a triple agent" working for the Soviets all along, he said.

Some intelligence experts believe Mr. Shadrin is alive in the Soviet Union. However, Soviet press accounts have blamed the CIA for murdering him, a charge not likely to have been made if he were alive, experts say.